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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3531
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5722
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3437
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3301
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3965
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1171
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3945
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 001232

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KIRF](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN'S MUFTI REPLACED; IMAMS RESHUFFLED

11. (U) Sensitive but Unclassified. Not for Internet distribution.

12. (SBU) On September 26, Turkmenistan's Mufti since 2004, Rowshen Allaberdiyev, was relieved of his positions as the nation's Mufti and as the Chief Imam of the largest mosque in Turkmenistan, following a resolution by the Council of Turkmenistan's Muftiyet. The mosque was the Holy Mosque of Turkmenbashi in Gypjak village, Ruhabat district, Ahal province, the principal shrine to the former president located not far from Ashgabat. The demotion was due to his reassignment to another post: Head of the Council on Religious Affairs (CRA) in Dashoguz Province and Chief Imam of Dashoguz Province. The reason for Allaberdiyev's demotion is unknown. The Council of the Muftiyet also named the Head of the Lebap Provincial CRA and Chief Imam of Lebap Province Hayitlijev to take over Allaberdiyev's former positions. (NOTE: Hayitlijev's biographic information is not available. END NOTE.)

13. (SBU) Allaberdiyev's demotion and reassignment was part of a broader reshuffling within Turkmenistan's official Islamic hierarchy. As noted above, Allaberdiyev was sent to northern Dashoguz Province. The following appointments were also made: Akyev was appointed to the posts of the Head of the Council on Religious Affairs and Chief Imam of Balkan Province; Hojagulyev was appointed to the posts of the Head of the Council on Religious Affairs and Chief Imam of Lebap Province; Muhammedov was appointed to the posts of the Head of the Council on Religious Affairs and Chief Imam of Mary Province; and Hojayejev was appointed to the posts of the Head of the Council on Religious Affairs and Chief Imam of Ashgabat.

14. (SBU) Allaberdiyev occupied the position of Mufti of Turkmenistan since August 24, 2004 and was appointed Imam of Gypjak Mosque, the largest mosque in Central Asia, since October 21, 2004. At the time of appointment, Allaberdiyev, born in 1977, was the youngest ever Mufti of Turkmenistan. He graduated from the Theology Faculty of Turkmen State University in 1999 and is a supporter of moderate Islam.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: The announcement of Allaberdiyev's replacement was unexpected news. Since we lack details about the rules by which the Muftiyet is governed, it is not possible to know whether Allaberdiyev was removed because his term as Mufti expired, or

whether he fell into disfavor with President Berdimuhamedov. The latter is less likely given that both are natives of the same village - Babarap. Allaberdiyev attended post's Iftar on September 10, and we have seen him at a number of occasions since. He seemed perfectly normal and gave no hint of an impending change. Perhaps with Allaberdiyev having served as Mufti for five years, the Muftiyet was simply ripe for a personnel reshuffle, a practice that is common in other branches of Turkmenistan's official hierarchy.

END COMMENT.

CURRAN